



# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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## **Help is Finally on the Way for Milwaukee County Residents Experiencing Mental Illness** *Legislature Passes Senate Bill 565, Bill Awaits Governor's Signature*

Early Friday morning the State Assembly gave overwhelming bipartisan final approval to Senate Bill 565 with a vote of 89 - 1. Last week, the State Senate passed Senate Bill 565 on a unanimous 33 - 0 vote. The bill is now headed to the Governor to be signed into law. Senate Bill 565 will pave the way for implementing long overdue reforms to the delivery of mental health services in Milwaukee County.

Countless reports over the last several decades have documented critical problems with the delivery of mental health services in Milwaukee County. Most recently, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel's "Chronic Crisis" Series did an excellent job of providing a detailed documentary on how the problems have devolved into a state of emergency because of decades of inaction. With this bill, long overdue reform is finally on the way.

"Senate Bill 565 removes the politics from the delivery of mental health care and put the focus where it belongs; on the people who are patients. Rather than politicians making these critical decisions, health professionals with the expertise and knowledge in the delivery of mental health services will design the best model of care for patients. I'm confident this new law will move our community to a recovery - oriented, person centered model of care. It will protect the personal liberty of those who need these services the most, in the least restrictive manner possible," said Representative Joe Sanfelippo (R-West Allis).

"This plan will bring in the best and brightest experts in the field to evaluate mental health services and will ensure those services run smoothly and effectively going forward. The board will focus on accountability, which is crucial in dealing with problems that have arisen in the mental health services field in Milwaukee County. Numerous studies have shown the need for change as patients continue to be neglected. We have already waited too long to address these concerns," said Senator Leah Vukmir (R-Wauwatosa).

"We have been able to pass 14 bipartisan bills which will dramatically improve mental health services in Wisconsin. The dramatic improvements made this session would never have been possible without the leadership of Governor Walker and Speaker Vos who made improving mental health services a priority this session. The reason Governor Walker and Speaker Vos were able to have full confidence in the focus on improving mental health services is because of the unwavering support of consumers, advocates, family members, providers and the bi-partisan support of the legislature. Politics were truly put aside to transform how mental health services will be delivered in this state for generations to come," said Sanfelippo.

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